

Tracking the Field

An un-PC scorecard of the Athens Olympic Games

By Steve Sailer

THAT THE FIRST modern Olympics were held in Athens in 1896 turned out to be an inspired choice. Not only did ancient Greece invent the games in 776 BC, but modern Greece's struggle for freedom from the Turks in the 1820s—the rebellion in which Lord Byron gave his life—fired the 19th-century romantic nationalist imagination, of which the Olympic revival was a felicitous outgrowth.

A particularly creative tribute to patriotism was the organizers' invention of a footrace over the 26 miles that Pheidipides is said to have run from Marathon to Athens with the joyous news of the defeat of the Persian invaders in 490 BC. The inspiring victory of a Greek shepherd named Spiridon Louis in the inaugural marathon did more than anything else to help the Olympic spirit survive the organizational ineptitude of the next two Olympics.

In that distant era, national pride drove European artists to create masterpieces redounding to the glory of their homelands. Such atavistic attitudes are as rare in the cultural realm today as the artistic greatness they spawned.

In the globalists' fantasy of post-nationalist sports, the Olympics likewise wouldn't be organized around anything so passé as patriotism. Instead, athletes sponsored by Coke could battle Nike's hired guns for world marketing supremacy. The only problem with this vision is that nobody would watch. In these hypothetical Globalist Games, how would you know for whom to root? Watching eight strangers splash around

face down in a swimming pool is dull unless you can use nationality to choose a favorite. In reality, the only sport where fan loyalties are more corporate than regional is NASCAR, and that's because stockcar racing is already a festival of ethnic pride for white Protestants from red states.

At the Athens Games, the stratagems of the sponsors receded to the level of inevitable background noise while overt patriotic gestures took center stage. Back in 1984, it was an unusual and controversial gesture when Carl Lewis waved a large American flag while jogging his victory lap after winning the 100-meter dash. By 2004, however, almost every medalist draped his national banner across his shoulders while celebrating for the television cameras.

Rivalries among nations stoke competitive excellence, both on and off the field. Killjoy economists warn that Greece's vast investment in staging the 2004 Olympics may never pay off, but the Greeks will remember that, in the face of universal skepticism about their ability to pull it off, they threw the world one helluva party.

Track and field, the Olympics' signature sport, has its troubles, both well-publicized (doping) and subtle but systemic. Running's biggest problem as a spectator sport is that its best fans—data-loving European and East Asian nerds—don't overlap much with its biggest stars: brawny sprinters of the West African diaspora and lean and hungry distance runners from East Africa and the Maghreb.

Yet running has one great strength: it is the most universal, even natural, of sports. It's the only major game where humanity's fascinating multiplicity competes on a relatively level playing field little tilted by the vast disparities in GNP that predetermine which countries are likely to win and lose in other sports, even soccer.

In Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop*, the press baron Lord Copper memorably defined his newspaper's policy as, "The *Beast* stands for strong mutually antagonistic governments everywhere... Self-sufficiency at home, self-assertion abroad." This admirable philosophy comes closest to realization in the main Olympic stadium, where this year 40 different countries, including several of the world's poorest, battled their way to track and field medals. Black Africa has had little to cheer about in recent decades, but the smooth-striding, narrow-hipped highlanders of Kenya and Ethiopia tied for third in track and field medals with seven each, trailing only America (25) and Russia (20).

The Anglophone West Indies are healthier and happier places than West Africa, and its stylish representatives were omnipresent in the sprint finals. For the second Olympics in a row, the tiny Bahamas (population 300,000) beat the world in a globally televised women's race.

The Arab world hasn't had many accomplishments to celebrate lately, but the famed miler Hicham El Guerrouj who, with his emaciated build and dark circles under his eyes, looks more like an El

Greco martyr than a millionaire athlete, won gold at both 1500 and 5000 meters. The short Moroccan with long legs turned out to be the dry land equivalent of the tall American with short legs, Michael Phelps, the human boogieboard whose elongated Mannerist torso skimmed through the water to eight medals.

We are constantly advised to “celebrate diversity,” but when we actually see human biodiversity night after night on TV, we are supposed to remain oblivious to the obvious. For example, one unavoidable lesson of the Olympics was that different racial groups are at their best at different length races. That the human species has a wide variety of talents strikes me as a wonderful thing, but most of the press treats this fact as a shameful secret.

Little symbolizes poverty and just-plain-getting-a-raw-deal-in-life as abjectly as a barefoot Ethiopian. Yet, way back at the 1960 Olympics, a barefoot Ethiopian named Abebe Bikila astonished the world by running away from his wealthier, more privileged rivals to win the marathon. Since then, East African men have dominated long distance running, showing us new feats that we hadn’t known human beings could accomplish. In Athens, East African men, ranging from Eritreans to South Africans, won 13 of the 18 medals in races from 800 meters to the marathon.

In contrast, West Africans leave no mark at distances beyond 1500 meters, but the shorter the race, the more they dominate it, achieving utter monopolization of that quickest, purest test of speed, the men’s 100-meter dash. Every boy on earth tries his hand at sprinting short distances, so 84 runners from 63 countries competed in the first of four rounds to determine the World’s Fastest Man. Yet by the semifinal heats, the 16 qualifiers remaining were all black men of West African descent. Indeed, over the last six Olympics, all 48 male finalists

in the 100 meters have come from West Africa or its diaspora.

Stringent drug testing brought the steroid problem under better control in 2004, as shown by Athens’ shortage of new world records in track and field. Indeed, all the current women’s sprint records were set in the doped-up 1980s, when the East German sports-chemical complex churned out manly frauleins who ripped to gold medals until the late Florence Griffith-Joyner, frustrated at repeatedly finishing second to unnaturally muscular women, turned herself into a comic book superheroine in 1988 and set records that hopefully will never be broken.

Will track fans abandon their sport if they don’t get a constant fix of new records? I doubt it. Does baseball suffer because Joe DiMaggio’s 56-game hitting streak and Ted Williams’ .406 average have both withstood all challengers since 1941? In contrast, did baseball benefit in 2001 when a pumped-up Barry Bonds broke a pumped-up Mark McGwire’s three-year old home run record? Unlikely. Long-lasting milestones burnish the legendary names of the sport and give casual fans easy-to-remember frames of reference. If nobody breaks Michael Johnson’s 1996 record in the 200 meters of 19.32 seconds for decades (this year, a scary fast Shawn Crawford ran “only” 19.79), track will be better off.

Everyone automatically assumes that women are catching up to men in running speed, but the truth is that the “gender gap” in times between male and female medalists was actually slightly wider in 2004 (men ran 11.23 percent faster than women in equivalent races) than way back in 1976 (11.18 percent).

Why? From 1970-1988, white women from Communist countries accounted for 71 of the 84 records set at 100–1500 meters. In contrast, Warsaw Pact white men set exactly zero of the 23 male records. Then the Berlin Wall fell, and

we learned how East German coaches enabled white women to outspurt black women so consistently: by chemically masculinizing them. It turns out that masculinity—in its lowest-common-denominator definition of muscularity and aggressiveness—is not a social construct at all: East German biochemists simply mass-produced masculinity.

The East German bioengineers were stumped at producing male sprint champions, however, because the benefits of a given amount of steroids are much greater for women than men. Since men average 10 times more natural testosterone than women, they need dangerously large, Ben Johnson-sized doses to make huge improvements, while women can speed-up significantly on smaller, less-easily detected amounts. Thus, the reduction in steroid use due to improved drug testing has hurt women’s times more.

Perhaps the most important event of the Olympics will turn out to be the failure of the once untouchable U.S. Olympic basketball team, an all-black squad of physically gifted NBA stars that was beaten by better-shooting and more collaborative teams from Argentina, Lithuania, and even Puerto Rico.

In the 1970s stereotype, white American players were the dogged defenders, while blacks were the flashy scorers. Then, the John Thompson-Patrick Ewing teams at Georgetown made defense fashionable among blacks, leading to a great leap forward in the quality of NBA play that culminated with the incomparable 1992 Olympic Dream Team. Unfortunately, the trend went too far and many blacks lost interest in working on their outside shooting, which proved disastrous in Athens. With luck, this Olympic embarrassment will serve as a wake-up call to African-American males that gangsta-rap attitudes are needlessly undermining not just black basketball, but also the race as a whole. ■

Crime After Crime

An inmate's account of the horror of prison rape

By Jens Soering

I WAS SO SCARED I cannot even remember what I screamed. But it must have been persuasive, for Flickin' Joe loosened his grip just enough for me to slide out of his hold, scamper away from the showers, and lock myself in my cell. Somewhere on the top tier I left behind my soap dish and my shampoo, my towel and my dignity—but not my virginity.

Flickin' Joe must have been stalking me for months. Like the rest of the inmates and the guards, I had assumed he was no danger to men because his primary sexual outlet was “gunning down” female correctional officers. That was how he had earned his nickname: when a woman guard came into view, he would busily flick himself through his skin-tight shorts. Neither the staff nor other prisoners dared object because Flickin' Joe was the biggest, baddest, blackest weightlifter in our known universe. I figured that a young, white, “fresh fish” like me was out of the firing line. I was wrong.

Such was my personal introduction to penitentiary love, 13 years ago in B-left pod, Building 4, Mecklenburg Correctional Center in Boydton, Va. At that point I had already spent four years in jail in England, whence I had unsuccessfully fought extradition to the United States. Inmate-on-inmate rapes were unknown in the London prison where I had been housed; even consensual homosexuality was rare and frowned upon. In America, on the other hand, the “convict code” encourages both forced and unforced sex, as I nearly learned at Flickin' Joe's tender hands.

My first reaction upon reaching the safety of my cell was relief so intense it swept through my body like a wave. Feeling another man pressed against my back, sensing nothing between me and penetration than the ultra-thin fabric of his sports shorts, knowing that my attacker outweighed me by over 100 pounds, seeing the correctional officer in the dayroom control booth discreetly look down at her *National Enquirer*, realizing that no other prisoner would prevent Flickin' Joe from breaking in the new guy, and hearing him growl in my ear, “What choo gonna do if I drag you in my cell right now?”—all that was perhaps the single most terrifying experience of my life. Once the terror passed, I felt both exhausted and strangely elated. I had lived to fight another day! But then I began to realize that my problems were far from over. In some ways, they had just begun.

At the reception and classification center where I had spent a few months before coming to this prison, I and at least a dozen other new intakes had watched a young man get raped. His cell partner pulled a shank on him and forced him to perform fellatio through a broken-out window in their cell door on a prisoner in the hallway. Everyone—including, I am sorry to say, myself—cheered and applauded, perhaps because we were so intensely relieved that we were not the ones being abused.

When the victim reported the assault, he was placed in the punishment block “for his own protection,” while the aggressor remained in the general prison

population. No one dared to co-operate with the perfunctory institutional investigation since snitches were beaten, raped, and sometimes killed. And so the predator was never held accountable, while his victim could look forward to spending his entire sentence “protected” in a series of segregation units.

Knowing this, I did not tell the guards about Flickin' Joe's attack on me. Nor did I speak to the facility's psychologist: he simply doled out tranquilizers and, in my case, would report the assault to the security staff. If I turned to other inmates for emotional support, they would read this sign of weakness as an invitation to become my “prison daddy” or “friend”—both penitentiary euphemisms for jailhouse husbands. Telling my family was out of the question, too, since that would only cause them anxiety about something they could not change. So I kept my mouth shut and started lifting weights to work off my pent-up emotions.

Looking back, I realize how freakishly lucky I was that I had not been raped, like so many other fresh fish. Had I been, I might well be dead today because Flickin' Joe has since died of AIDS. That is the part that late-night comedians leave out when they crack jokes about dropping the soap in a penitentiary shower.

Prison rape is not an isolated, if tragic phenomenon, but a common occurrence in America's correctional systems. According to the former Republican attorney general of Virginia, Mark Early, “anywhere from 250,000 to 600,000” of